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SUBJECT: FRENCH COMPLAIN ABOUT RUSSIAN ACTIONS IN OSCE,  
CALL FOR CLOSE "QUAD" CONSULTATIONS

REF: USOSCE 234

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR BRUCE TURNER, FOR REASONS 1.4  
B/D

11. (C) Summary: MFA officials told visiting EUR/RPM Director Gary Robbins that France saw a "largely negative" context for the OSCE, primarily due to Russian intransigence. Generally speaking, the West had a radically different vision of the OSCE than Russia, and it was important, they said, that member states not give in to constant Russian demands for "reform," which they view as a Russian tactic to block progress. The MFA officials called for close consultations among the U.S., France, UK and Germany in the lead-up to the Brussels Ministerial. They also underscored tight domestic budget considerations, which would compel France to insist on refocusing the OSCE on its core agenda. End summary.

12. (U) EUR/RPM Director Gary Robbins met on June 6 with Paul Dahan, the MFA's PDAS-equivalent for strategic affairs, Nicolas Niemtchinow, DAS-equivalent for strategic affairs and Eric Tosatti, OSCE desk officer. Poloffs accompanied.

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RUSSIA AND THE "REFORM" CANARD  
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13. (C) Dahan began by saying that the current context leading up to the Brussels Ministerial was "largely negative." The Third CFE Review Conference (reftel) had not gone well, and over the past year, Russia had flexed its muscle in a number of worrying ways, including the January 2006 energy crisis. At issue, concluded Dahan, was a basic "values gap" between Russia, which wanted a rigid OSCE organization and weak principles, and the West, which wanted a more supple organization and strong principles. It was critically important, said Dahan, to stop the Russian drive to "reform" the OSCE, an obvious attempt to remake the organization to reflect Russian priorities. Robbins agreed, and emphasized the importance of avoiding any tendency to meet the Russians half-way on these proposals, which would serve only to weaken the organization. Better to have no consensus than agreement on bad ideas. Although insisting on the importance of being firm and of telling the Russians no, Dahan said France might be nonetheless open to a few "nano-carrots." Niemtchinow added that under no circumstance would these carrots compromise principles or involve money. They would be "window-dressing carrots," and would only be offered after positive Russian actions. One example, said Dahan, might be to allow ODIHR results to be published in Russian as well as English. Dahan and Niemtchinow called for close consultations, bilaterally or also including Germany and the UK, to present positive proposals in advance of the Brussels Ministerial.

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FROZEN CONFLICTS  
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¶4. (C) The key to the frozen conflicts, said Dahan, is to re-establish confidence with Russia. He said that NATO enlargement into the former Soviet space encourages Russia not to act positively with regard to these conflicts, for fear of losing leverage. Russia needs the frozen conflicts because they serve as "irritants" to the West, said Dahan. Robbins said the USG continues to raise with Moscow its role in the frozen conflicts, most recently concerning Russian encroachment into South Ossetia. Robbins also praised French support at the CFE Review Conference in maintaining insistence of Russia's fulfillment of the Istanbul commitments. He noted that the USG was readying a two million dollar donation for the June donors conference in Brussels. Dahan said France would send its Ambassador to Georgia and MFA officials, but would only be able to make a "symbolic" offer, due to budgetary constraints.

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KAZAKHSTAN 2009  
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¶5. (C) Dahan assured Robbins that France agreed with the USG that any CIO should reflect the values of the organization. It was difficult to make this case for Kazakhstan. Noting president of the Senate Christian Poncelet's recent visit to Kazakhstan, he said Poncelet's implicit endorsement of Kazakhstan's bid was not the official French position, but did reflect pressures on the French government coming from commercial sectors. France would not insist either way, and would join consensus, said Dahan. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

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